

Title: *A Coast to Coast of the South Island*

Subtitle: *by paddle, pedal and foot ... the long way*

Author: Ginney Deavoll

Published: 2013

Publisher: Aries Publishing

Website: www.ginneydeavoll.com

Contents: 184 pp, colour photos, maps, art throughout

Cover: softcover

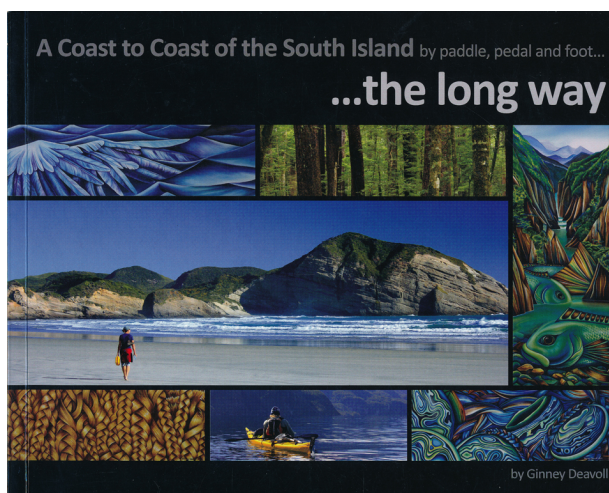
Size: 210 x 264 mm, landscape format

Price: NZ\$ 49.95 (\$6.80 p&p)

ISBN: 978 0 473 24105 6

Availability: author

Review: Paul Caffyn



What a gem this book is. In the last newsletter I had a moan about how many recent paddling books have either no photos or just a slim black and white section with thumbnail pics. Then both Max Grant and Kerry-Jayne Wilson's beautifully illustrated books were published earlier this year (reviews in NZSC No.163). Now Ginney Deavoll's book on a South Island paddle, bike and tramp adventure, has been published with not only full colour photos throughout, but it also includes her visually stunning paintings of places she and Tyrell discovered during their journey.

In 2011, Ginney Deavoll and her partner Tyrell completed a Northland paddle, starting from Hahei in the Coromandel, up the east coast, out to Great Barrier Island then up the east coast of Northland to Houhora. They both had their NZOIA Sea Kayak Guide qualifications and in recent years have spent the winters guiding in the Whitsundays and summers in the Coromandel. They were keen to embark on another expedition after their Northland paddling trip, which for both of them had become a way of life, and afterwards led to a successful exhibition of Ginney's paintings of that trip.

Tyrell was milking cows in Canterbury and Ginny was finishing the Northland paintings when they decided another adventure was needed. Ginny sent off an application form to the Hillary Commission for funds for a trip from one end of the South Island to the other, paddling from Te Waewae Bay around the Fiordland Coast to Jackson Bay, biking up to Otira then tramping north to Cape Farewell. Although their trip was short-listed, they didn't get a grant but decided to do the trip anyway, setting off kayaking on 18 February and reaching the Craypot Inn at Jackson Bay on 11 April.

Ginney evocatively describes the roller coaster emotions involved with paddling the Fiordland coast, the relief of reaching a sheltered landing and the sheer terror of a big surf break-out. Her painting of 'Barn Bay' shows a monster wave about to break, which captures their attempt to break out through the 'killer waves' protecting Barn Bay. During a brief lull in a regular line up of big sets, Tyrell and Ginney sprinted for open water: 'As we topped the first wave I was certain we could never make it in time over the second. Already I could see it curling over, the spray whipped off the lip. We veered right and paddled like Olympic athletes.'.... 'We just made it. A few metres further in and it might have been a different story. Once I had topped the last wave I kept paddling out to sea about two kilometres at full speed and ate a packet of peanut M&Ms before I convinced myself I was safe.'

From Jackson Bay, Ginney and Tyrell push-biked up the West Coast then up to Otira, where they hefted big packs and completed the rest of the journey to Cape Farewell on foot.

Ginny's writing style is captivating, and flows nicely with a good mix of land and seascape descriptions, characters met on the way, the day to day launching and paddling routine, and stomach churning encounters with big surf breakers, storms and a big great white shark. I like the way Ginney describes the balance and teamwork between her and Tyrell:

'Along with our technical skills and experience each of us have our own unique personality to bring along. Tyrell is the realist and also the target setter each day. He'll be on a mission to complete the challenge set for the day but will always notice the small things and have the time to stop and appreciate a stunning view, to remember the name of a tree or watch a bird going about its life. Tyrell is calm and quick thinking in a potentially dangerous situation. I think I'm the big picture person and the instigator; I start the ball rolling on these wild ideas and have complete belief in their success. I won't settle for mediocre or not trying. I pride myself on being solution focused and having a good dose of common sense. But I could never do it on my own and wouldn't want to. I find that the most rewarding part of these journeys is sharing the experience with great friends.'

The landscape format works really well with double columns of text, most pages with two photos and full-page width panoramic landscape pics. Side bar sections include background information on the fauna and flora, local history and the friends who helped with support crew roles.

For me it is the paintings that add another dimension to the book. Some are gorgeous sea or landscapes, which Ginney describes as 'sharing the significant moments' of the trip. The vibrancy of the paintings allows her to recapture the feel of sea spray in her face, the cold alpine air, taste the seafood dinner and hear the cascading rivers. Ginney notes: 'In between traveling and the outdoors I spend as much time as possible with brush in hand. My work has always reflected my passion of the outdoors, which is the main subject of my painting. I've dabbled in mural painting and watercolour but have found my niche in acrylics on canvas. I've found that I'm at my happiest and am most inspired when my world is split evenly between the outdoors and painting'.

As well as the detailed paintings of the flora, cabbage trees, carnivorous snails on the Heaphy Track, many paintings have a marvellous depth of field from the distant horizon to woven clumps of tussock on an alpine pass, or a shoal of kahawai inside a river mouth. One titled 'On a wing' has a close up albatross wing which feathers into the distance as a big blue peaking ocean swell. For more information about her artwork see: www.ginneydeavoll.com

My minor quibble is with the sharpness of the colour photos. Apart from that, this corker book portrays that wonderful sense of wilderness adventure awaiting in the South Island. Ginney has described and illustrated that essence of adventure so evocatively.